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The case for disarmament

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The Case for Disarmament

by JOHN SWOMLEY, JR.

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Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev's address to the United Nations last September made disarmament a subject of renewed discussion and hope. It was at a moment of stalemate in the international scene, and after a long record of failure to achieve even a measure of disarmament, that the Soviet Premier made his dramatic proposal for the world-wide elimination of armaments.

The proposal was hailed immediately by those who saw in it the hope of ending war and shifting the struggle between East and West to a non-military competition. Some saw it as an indication the Russians were ready to renounce direct military control over Eastern Europe if the West were prepared to abandon its military control over colonies, and its bases scattered throughout the world. In the underdeveloped world it was viewed as the one realistic way to release the billions of dollars and rubles and pounds and francs needed for construction and economic development.

Only a day before the Khrushchev address, Selwyn Lloyd, the British Foreign Secretary, made an important similar proposal to the United Nations, calling for disarmament "down to internal policing levels." But it did not receive the attention the world gave to the Soviet proposal, chiefly because Britain is not the acknowledged military leader of either the Eastern or Western bloc.

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In the United States the Khrushchev proposal aroused great interest precisely because the Soviet Union is our adversary in the cold war and our competitor in the arms race. The nation's press, however, was swift and outspoken in its criticism. In general, nine major criticisms have been leveled against the Khrushchev proposal and against disarmament in general.

One—Khrushchev didn't say anything new. He simply dusted off the old Soviet proposals made by Litvinov in 1927.

It is true, of course, that the two proposals are similar in that both of them called for total disarmament to be carried out in stages over a four-year period. But there are some important differences.

In 1927, the Soviet Union was weak and the Western nations were the great powers of the world. The Litvinov proposal was viewed then as a method for increasing the relative strength of the Soviet Union by eliminating the military might of the West. Today, the U.S.S.R. is a great power and is proposing the elimination of its own great military machine as well as those in the West.

Litvinov made his proposal when there was still fear of a German power revival that might result in war against France. This was an important factor in French opposition to disarmament, and France was one of the two most powerful nations in Europe. Today, France and Germany are working together. The danger from Germany is that she might precipitate a war between Russia and

America. In fact the Russian fear of the rearmament of Germany is undoubtedly one of the reasons for the current Soviet proposal.

The Litvinov plan, if it had been accepted, would have spelled the end of British, French, Dutch, and other forms of colonialism maintained by armed force. None of the great powers, except the United States, was prepared then to yield empire because it would have weakened their great power status. Today, most colonies either are free or are in the process of achieving freedom. The mother country is not only aware of the inevitability of ultimate freedom but would profit more from not having to pay a heavy arms bill than it would from colonial investments. Disarmament would also enhance the relative power status of such second and third rate powers as Britain, France, Germany, Holland, and Italy.

The greatest difference between 1927 and 1959 is that arms then could be used in war without destroying civilization and annihilating the nations engaged in such conventional hostilities. Today we live in the nuclear age. Disarmament is therefore simply a recognition that preparation for a war we dare not wage is too hazardous to continue.

Two—It is argued that the Russians will not accept inspection. While it is true they have dragged their feet on inspection proposals thus far, Khrushchev quite frankly pointed out in his speech that the Soviet Union had feared inspection coupled with only partial disarmament would provide merely "for the collection of intelligence information" which enemy states could then use. But if disarmament were complete "the states will have nothing to conceal from one another any more." Therefore "general and complete disarmament . . . will remove all the barriers that were raised during the consideration of questions of partial disarmament."

Khrushchev did not elaborate on the details of inspection during the first three stages. He simply spoke of a system of international control to "function in conformity with the stages by which disarmament should be effected." It is obvious, then, that only the most serious negotiations on our part will reveal whether the Russians are prepared to have adequate inspection at each stage. If they were convinced that we intended to press for complete disarmament and were in fact already planning for economic change to a peacetime economy, they would have evidence of our intentions sufficient to inspire confidence in adequate inspection at each stage.

Three—The Khrushchev proposal was criticized on the grounds that it is utopian to think of *total* disarmament, that it is only *excessive* arms that endanger us. Two questions are here involved. The first is whether the Soviet Union and other nations are ready to disarm. The second is whether disarmament by stages constitutes a realistic road to the ultimate goal.

The first question can be answered only tentatively since much depends on public opinion, the vested interests in military establishments, and on a recognition by statesmen that nuclear war can never defend, but will only destroy, those who engage in it. The second question is answered by the fact that only when nations are convinced that satisfactory reduction of arms has taken place in stage one will they move on to the other stages. Thus the only fresh element in the current proposal is that, unlike previous plans, reduction of arms is seen not as an end in itself but as a step-by-step process toward complete

disarmament.

Khrushchev therefore rightly criticized partial disarmament. "Apprehensions would always exist," he said, "that with the aid of the remaining types of armaments and armed forces the possibility of launching an attack would continue extant."

What is certainly utopian is to believe that there is a cause and effect relationship between the possession of weapons and the maintenance of peace. Such thinking overlooks the frequency with which wars have been started by blunder and miscalculation, and assumes that arms will deter because calm, peace-loving, and rational statesmen will always be in control in each of the many nations of the world.

Four—A more important criticism of the Soviet proposal is the assertion that "you can't negotiate with the U.S.S.R. because she won't keep her agreements." Great power states, not the least of them the Soviet Union, have a record of breaking agreements that it is not in their interest to keep. After insisting in 1945 that Japan and Germany be disarmed and agree not to re-arm, the United States has insisted that they re-arm. Britain and France broke the United Nations Charter when they sent armies into the Suez area. The Soviet Union has likewise broken agreements. But the Soviets, just as other nations, keep agreements which are in their interest to keep. The Soviet Union has kept the agreement with the United States to withdraw troops from Austria and respect that country's neutrality. Similarly, the Finnish-Russian treaty continues to be observed. The problem in negotiating a disarmament agreement is to devise one that will be in the interests of both Russia and the West. Total disarmament and the chance to build and maintain economic and political systems free from the crushing burden of arms would be in the interests of all. Serious problems will be encountered in negotiating such an agreement, but none that is insuperable.

Five—It is said that the Soviet Union is not interested in disarmament or it would have accepted the Baruch Plan. The Baruch proposal in June, 1946, provided for an International Atomic Development Authority that would own or control all atomic energy activities and have the power to inspect. Only when such a control and inspection system was working would we stop making our bombs. Baruch gave no assurance that the United States would stop making or stockpiling atom bombs until we were satisfied at some remote and indefinite date that international control was effective. In the meantime the U.S.S.R. and others were precluded from developing atomic weapons.

Such a proposal was viewed by Russia in much the same way as we would have viewed a similar Russian proposal about intercontinental missiles. One can imagine the uproar in Congress, if after Sputnik, the Russians had indicated they would agree to stop making and testing such missiles only after an inspection system was operating, and, in the meantime the United States would not be free to develop space rockets or other missiles.

Six—It is said that we tried disarmament after two world wars and it failed. Actually, the Allied powers, after insisting on the disarmament of Germany, refused to disarm themselves in spite of having agreed to do so. This refusal to follow suit was one of the arguments used by German nationalists to justify German re-

armament and thus put an end to the humiliating inferiority of their nation.

The Washington Naval Disarmament Conference, which resulted in the scrapping of some blueprints, and some vessels in the process of construction, after World War I, resulted in a relative increase in American naval strength rather than a decrease. The Conference ended the Anglo-Japanese Treaty, thus increasing America's relative strength in the Pacific. It also resulted in a 5-5-3 ratio for building and maintaining navies, thus giving the United States, without an expensive arms race, equality with Great Britain, the leading naval power of that day, and a fixed advantage over Japan.

Following World War II, the United States had a monopoly on the atomic bomb, a navy larger than all others, what General George Marshall called a "superior" air force, and an army of more than a million men.

Those who say that the United States disarmed after two world wars are confusing demobilization with disarmament. No nation can continue indefinitely after the end of a war to maintain the degree of mobilization reached during the war. But demobilization to peacetime military levels is a far cry from total disarmament.

Seven—Another argument used against any disarmament proposal is that it is not armaments but political tensions which cause war. Such a statement implies that armaments in the possession of one nation do not inspire fear or tension in others. Yet there was a genuine rise in political tension immediately after the Russian development of nuclear weapons and again after the successful launching of Sputnik.

Professor Robert MacIver of Columbia University, in his classic *Web of Government,* wrote:

> "When historians tell us that the causes of a particular war were such and such, we still do not know why the 'causes' caused the war. They might have existed without causing the war. It is often hard to distinguish between pretexts and motivations. In the last resort, the cause of institutionalized behavior is the institution that sanctions it. Every institution sets up mechanisms for its own perpetuation."

The armaments system and the armed forces of each nation are the institutions with vested interests in preparing and planning for war. The fact of similar interests in other nations provides a convenient competition.

This was evident prior to World War I when the French general staff insisted on large loans to Russia to modernize the Russian Army and build strategic railways to the German frontier. The Russians, in turn, bribed the Paris press to support the passage of the French government's three-year conscription bill. The German general staff became convinced that delay would add to Russian strength in 1914. The Kaiser and political rulers of Germany were unable to resist the pressures of the general staff. When Austria-Hungary, under pressure from its own general staff, decided to strike Serbia after the assassination of the Archduke, general war resulted.

Eight—In a critique of disarmament appearing in the October 11, 1959, New York *Times,* former Spanish diplomat Salvador de Madariaga made the amazing statement:

> "Nations do not seek armaments as they seek wealth or food or health. They consider armaments as a burden and a nuisance which they accept merely as a necessary

evil. It follows that the only way to disarm would be to remove the cause which makes the evil and nuisance of armaments necessary."

This statement is simply not true. Events of 1947 and 1948 right here in the United States demonstrate clearly that nations, and especially factions within nations, do indeed "seek armaments," sometimes so eagerly as to resort to dishonest means. In 1947, after the Pentagon had failed consistently since 1944 to get Universal Military Training, an all-out propaganda effort was begun, wrote Colonel William Neblett in *Pentagon Politics,* to convince the nation "that we were living in a state of undeclared emergency; that war with Russia was just around the corner; and that the safety of the nation was dependent upon the speedy" build-up of the military establishment. Neblett added: "I know from my own knowledge of the men who worked up the fear campaign that they do not believe what they say. Their propaganda has always had the single objective to build a huge conscript professional military force of 10,000,000 men under the command of a professional general staff."

The same year, 1947, Field Marshall Viscount Montgomery visited Russia and, upon his return to England, informed "the British government that it would be fifteen to twenty years before Russia would be in a position to fight a major war with any chance of success—if indeed she ever wished to embark on such a course, which I doubted."

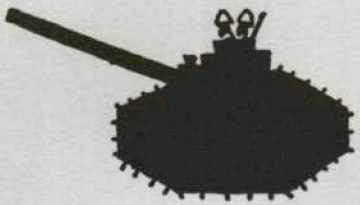
In spite of the Pentagon's 1947 campaign, Congress did not pass Universal Military Training. In March 1948, still intent on UMT, the Army handed to President Truman a false intelligence report which indicated that Russian troops were on the move and war was only a few weeks away. The President, in an emergency session of both Houses of Congress on March 17, asked for immediate passage of the Marshall Plan, the draft, and UMT. Shortly thereafter the Central Intelligence Agency properly evaluated the Army's report as false. Yet neither the President nor the Army was prepared to correct the impression of danger they had created. General Omar N. Bradley, Army chief of staff, continued until June 1948 to tell Congress that war with Russia was a "plausible possibility."

As a result of this trumped-up war scare, Congress passed measures designed to build America's military might.

On May 14, 1949, *United States News & World Report* said, "War scares, encouraged by high officials only a few weeks ago, so alarmed the . . . U.S. public that top planners now are having to struggle hard to keep Congress from pouring more money into national defense than the Joint Chiefs of Staff regard as wise or necessary. It is proving more difficult to turn off than to turn on a war psychology."

The Army's war talk and efforts in 1947-48 to secure the adoption of UMT and a large military establishment were a *cause* rather than a *result* of tension between the United States and the Soviet Union. It is true there were political tensions in 1948 arising from the Czech coup d'etat, but this followed the Army's 1947 campaign by many months. Moreover, when Congress offered a seventy group air force instead of UMT, President Truman and Army leaders felt it was unnecessary, thus confirming the analysis that they did not consider the Czech coup a forerunner of war with Russia. What they wanted was permanent universal conscription and a large peacetime army.

Nine—It is suggested that genuine agreement on disarmament is possible only if there are political settlements first. There is some truth in the idea that a relaxation of tensions is evidence of good faith in pursuing disarmament negotiations. But it is foolish to suppose that all political tensions can be eliminated from the world. If we had to wait until such a day there never would be any hope of disarmament. If, however, we achieve total disarmament, such problems as Berlin and Formosa will be more capable of solution. So long as military might is the basis of power, no government will give up what it does not have to give up. It is precisely because a solution in Berlin or Formosa would require one government to back down and would enhance the



military power advantage of another that such agreements cannot be made easily under present conditions. On the other hand, an abandonment of military power would eliminate most of the sources of tension over Berlin and Formosa.

It is nonetheless obvious that some political agreements would have to be reached before disarmament can be put into effect. Red China, for example, would have to be admitted to the United Nations if she were to be a party to a disarmament agreement which provided for inspectors on Chinese soil.

While the proposal for total universal disarmament is of such utmost importance as to raise high hopes, many grave problems lie ahead:

To avoid serious economic dislocation the United States would have to plan for the radical change from an arms to a non-military economy. Until our government undertakes such a study it is clear that any disarmament proposals or negotiations on our part are mere propaganda.

The Khrushchev proposal referred to "strictly limited contingents of police, of militia" for each country to maintain internal order. Exactly what this means must be seriously explored. Does Khrushchev intend to have large police forces in Hungary or will he rely on the Communist Party and economic factors to keep Hungary in the Soviet orbit?

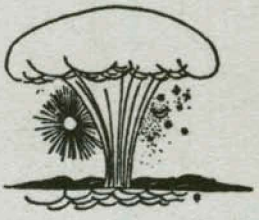
The Soviet proposal also failed to deal with the question of internal subversion. Should the international community protect small underdeveloped nations from internal subversion directed by agents of a great power? If so, how can we prevent the international community from being an instrument of the status quo designed to thwart legitimate political and social change? It may be that the international community should continue to refrain from interfering in clearly internal state matters. In this event, would the greater economic aid available during and after disarmament insure greater internal stability for nations in the process of change?

These problems and others must be squarely faced; but they are not beyond the ability of governments to solve. The immediate problem, however, is not one of solving all the details, important as they are. Rather it is one of insuring that our own government commit itself to the goal of total disarmament, and begin serious planning and negotiating with others to achieve that goal.

The United States cannot afford to

ignore or turn down the proposal for total disarmament. To do so would be an admission that the Soviet Union is the champion of peace while we want to perpetuate the war system. Our government cannot risk being branded as the nation that stood in the way of disarmament.

But beyond all this, we Americans cannot afford to perpetuate a system which could, through blunder, miscalculation, or intention, result in the destruction of civilization and the genetic distortion of the human race.



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